

Strategies for Enhancing Students' Social Development

In Our School Every Person
Needs to Feel



Government of South Australia
Department of Education and
Children's Services

Fostering Social Competencies in Young Children and Behaviour Management Techniques

A Practical Guide for Teachers and Parents

- ✱ Social skills are learned.
- ✱ Many young people need to be taught explicit social skills. This occurs through observation, modelling, role playing and demonstration of skills in the context of the home, classroom, school yard and in the community.
- ✱ Often it is necessary to give further support by providing extra and intensive social skills programs in sessions with an adult on a one-to-one basis and/or in adult directed small group sessions.

For those young people who need explicit teaching to develop social competencies, the following skills may need to be addressed:

- ✱ Basic hygiene – grooming.
- ✱ Greetings – what to say, hello, goodbye, how to have a conversation, terminating a conversation.
- ✱ How to initiate friendships – role play is particularly effective for modelling positive skills.
Acting out roles, complete with costuming at any age helps to reinforce skills and is useful for helping shy, withdrawn and belligerent young people to become one step removed from themselves. It is then hoped that through actively engaging in role playing social scenarios young people will begin to transfer these role-plays into real life situations.
- ✱ Scenarios – young people clearly remember when adults (in costume) act out social roles. They can then practise these skills themselves in role-play situations.
- ✱ Body language – smiling, reading body and facial cues.

- ✱ How to deal with rejection when others say ‘no’ (eg. try someone else, ask again, play on equipment, watch others, go to resource rooms).
- ✱ How to say ‘no’ to others.
- ✱ How to give compliments – this is a sophisticated skill and occurs at a higher developmental level, but modelling and teaching this skill is important.
- ✱ Specific play and sports skills – what skills do young people already have? What skills do they still need to be taught?
Teach individual skills required so that the young person can be included in games (eg. playing marbles, handball, football). For example the game of football needs the specific skills of kicking a ball, marking a ball, running etc. In order to play a game of football a young person needs to practise each skill.
- ✱ Allow young person to have a piece of equipment (eg. a ball) so that he or she can use this as a means of initiating play.
- ✱ Provide videos of young people playing and then allow discussion of the video with participants. Encourage discussion of what was seen in the video – competent or incompetent social skills.
- ✱ Continually revisit previously taught skills in assertiveness training and protective behaviours (eg. “stop, I don’t like it”). Visual cues, gestures are necessary – pitch these at the developmental levels of young people.
- ✱ Social skills are developmental.
- ✱ Children gain greater capacity for empathy, for compromise and kindness to others as they mature cognitively and emotionally AND they see these skills modelled by others.
- ✱ Normal peer conflict is characterised by the developmental level of the children involved.
- ✱ Conflict is an inevitable part of social interaction.

Encouraging positive behaviour

To encourage the development of positive social skills, it is important to establish boundaries for whole school codes of behaviour – what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour assists in promoting these behaviours, then young people are encouraged to observe and imitate acceptable behaviours.

For young people with disabilities, limit the use of verbal instructions and be aware of their developmental levels of social competencies. Visual cues, prompts and gestures are crucial.

Examples of good practice for promoting positive social behaviour in the school yard:

Teachers, adults on duty, buddies, mediators have a bag which contains several green and several red cards. Give green cards (for positive behaviour) to young persons whenever social competencies are observed.

Simply state what behaviour is being reinforced eg. “You said thank you when_____”.

Randomly target those students (who are specifically learning these skills) when the skills are transferred into a social setting. The skills need to be practised constantly before the skills become automatic.

When red cards are given for unacceptable behaviours this is a signal that more teaching and role-play of acceptable behaviours needs to occur. Demonstration of social competencies is then used as a learning experience rather than as a punishment. Consequences still need to be enforced.

Use buddy systems, peer mediators to reinforce positive skills. Green card holders can be reinforced (after the siren goes) by stickers etc.

Red card holders may be given a reminder sheet to practise skill. Further role-play, supervised practice should occur at the young person’s developmental level of social and intellectual competencies.

Refer to “Teaching Social Skills in Early Childhood – Let’s Talk About It”. DETE Publication (1998). Many suggestions in this book can be adapted to suit different age levels.

Eg. MacMillan CE, Aistrophe D, Brown J, Hannaford D and Martin M (1992). ‘The Sheidow Park Social Problem Solving Program’.

Adaptations for different age levels

Approximately 2 years of age

- ✱ Parallel play
- ✱ Goals of friendship and interactions are egocentric (self centred)
“that’s mine – you’re not having it”

Approximately 5 – 9 years of age

- ✱ Fun for all – introduction of rules and sharing whilst interacting. At this stage children do not fully understand or engage in empathy, mutuality and compromise.
- ✱ Frustration will occur when needs are not met.
“that’s mine, but I’ll share – only if there’s something in it for me”

Approximately 9 – 12 years of age

- ✱ Mutuality, commitment and loyalty are hallmarks of social interaction.
- ✱ At this age compromise is a skill that can be taught.
“that’s mine, but I’ll share because I like you and you’re my friend”

Getting along skills	Yes	No	Emerging
Sharing			
Turn taking			
Making rules and following them			
Assisting others			
Touching the right way			
Cooperation			
Politeness – please, thank you			

FRIENDSHIPS

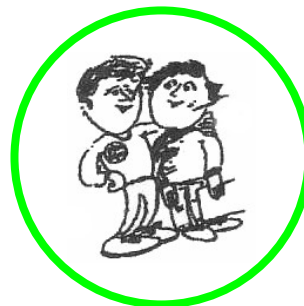


- * Visual cues – eg. cut from magazines
- * Role play, use of gestures, prompts
- * Watch modelling, films, videos, role plays of competent social skills.

"Go" signs for good friendships



listening



helping



sharing



compliments

Consequences Why?

Feelings...

for me

for the other person



calm



happy



annoyed



sad



frightened



angry

Expand 'feelings' illustrated as needed eg. add embarrassed, worried, nervous etc.

"Stop" signs which prevent good friendships



RULES **X** 



grabbing



swearing



teasing



hitting

School personnel and students taught to use visual hand cue prompt



Feelings...

for me

for the other person



calm



happy



annoyed



sad

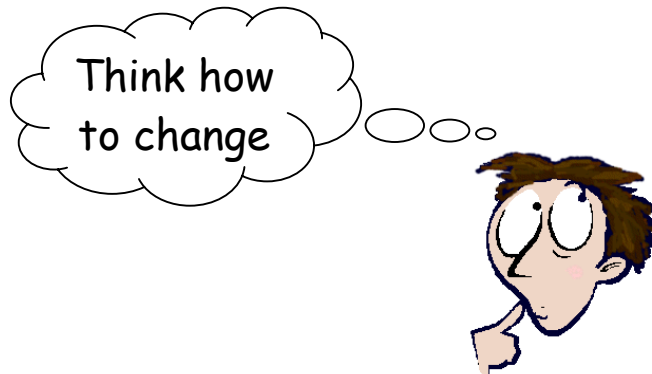


frightened



angry

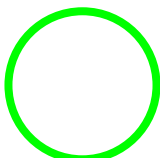
"Yellow" sign for learning how to change

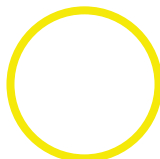


- 😊 **walk away**
- 😊 **find a quiet place**
- 😊 **find another person**
- 😊 **ask a teacher**
- 😊 **use a help card**
- 😊 **find a buddy**

1. Validate the emotion with a non-judgemental statement eg. “your face showed me that you were upset”.

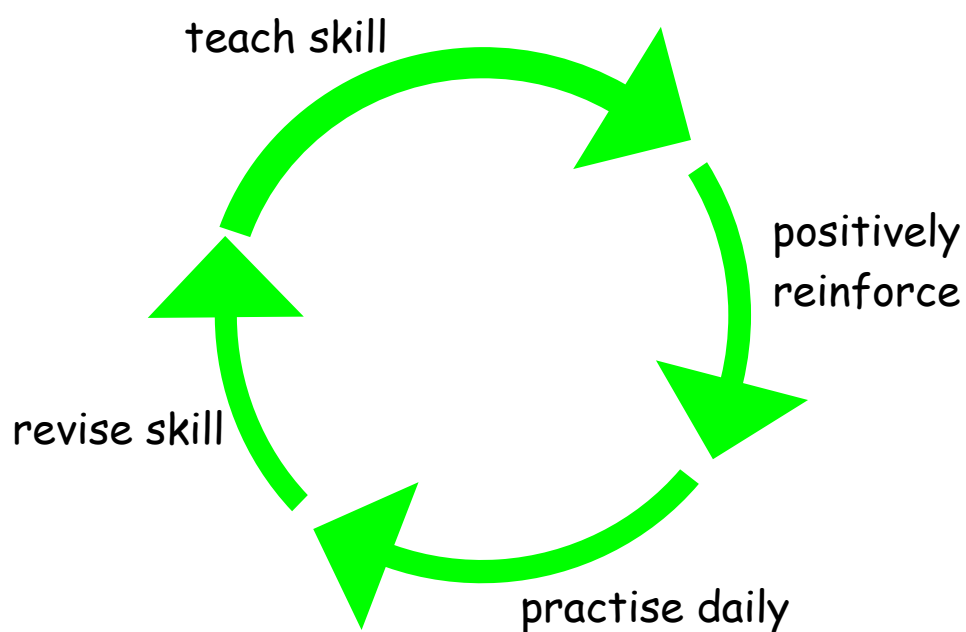
2. Mirror the  behaviour without judgement.

3. “We need to help you learn a green sign” 

4. Now demonstrate change process 



Change takes time

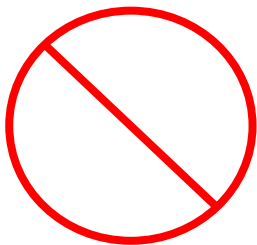


Sign that I forgot

(student illustrates, copies/writes)



sign



.....



How does the other person feel?



calm



happy



annoyed



sad



frightened



angry

Next time I will try to usesign.

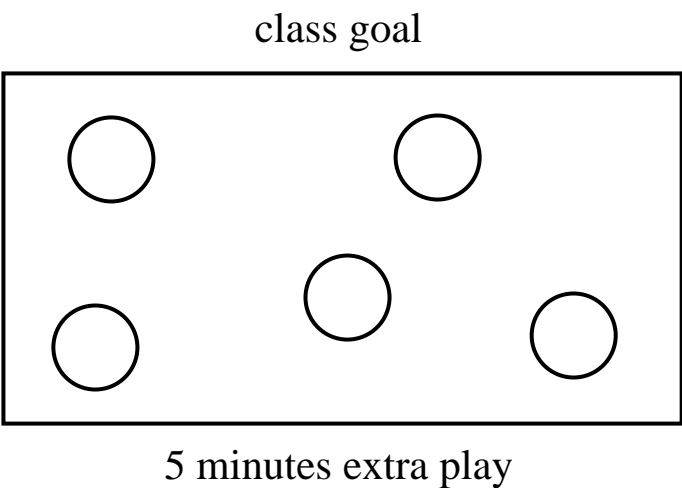
When adults observe young people moving towards acceptable behaviours reinforce (positively) immediately.

Eg. earn class point

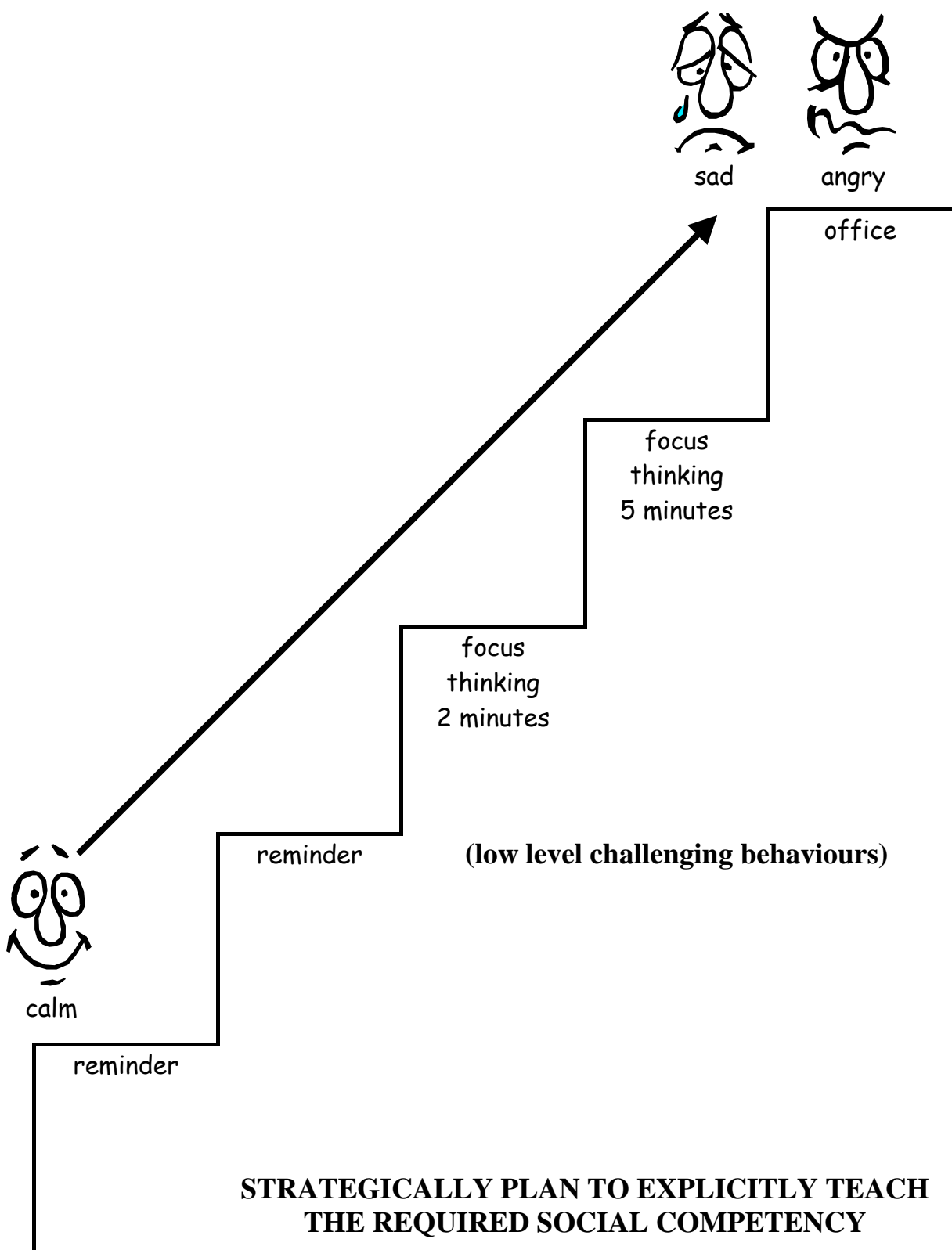
Eg. Goal of the Week

“Listening” Rule

Choose a responsible partner
and take a message



CONSEQUENCES



SAFE AREA

Emphasise personal safety and safety of others.

For older students use Anger Management program eg.

- ✱ “Taming Anger” Behaviour Support Service

Other references used in this book:

- ✱ “Stop, Think, Do” L. Petersen and A. Gannoni
- ✱ “Talk Sense to Yourself” J. Wragg
- ✱ “Behaviour Recovery” B. Rogers
- ✱ “Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms” H. McGrath and S. Francey
- ✱ “Skill Streaming the Elementary School Child” E. McGinnis & A. Goldstein
- ✱ “S3P - School Site Skills program” Behaviour Support Service
- ✱ “Effective Classroom Management” Behaviour Support Service
- ✱ Bully Proofing Program

How to respond to:

- ✱ Authority figures (when angry)
Encourage personal monitoring of anger management.
Eg. “negotiated cool off time”